

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This chapter addresses the direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on elements of the human environment from actions proposed in the CDCA Plan Amendment. This chapter is organized by environmental element, followed by a description and comparison of impacts from the relevant plan element alternatives.

Land use plans, such as the CDCA Plan Amendment, developed in accordance with Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations, provide landscape level decisions for managing the BLM-administered public lands. As a result, the impact analysis for land use plans level actions tends to be cumulative by nature.

4.16 Environmental Justice and Health Risks to Children

Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Recommendations. Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C) and No Action (D). The proposed eligibility recommendations, or deferral thereof, would have no adverse impacts on minority populations or children. Should a river, or portion thereof, later be determined to be suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System, the designation will preserve the river's outstanding recreational, geologic, and other values for the enjoyment of all present and future populations, without regard to income, race, nationality, age or other characteristics.

Visual Resource Management. Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C) and No Action (D). No impacts to special populations would occur as a result of the Proposed Plan or No Action Alternative. All proposed projects on federal lands would be subject to the consequences of the VRM classification system, including potential project redesign or the implementation of mitigation measures, regardless of the social, racial or other characteristics of the project proponent.

Land Health Standards. Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C) and No Action (D). Land health standards would apply to all BLM-managed lands and programs and would be implemented through the terms and conditions of permits, leases, and other authorizations, regardless of social, racial, economic or other characteristics of the project proponent. The proposed standards are intended to reduce the impacts of development on air quality, water quality, soils, vegetation and biological species, which would indirectly benefit all human populations.

Air Quality Management Strategy. Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C) and Alternative A. The proposed air quality management strategy would help to reduce PM10 emissions off of the public lands, and in conjunction with PM10 reducing actions on other lands, would help the Coachella Valley attain the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for PM10. Reductions in PM10 emissions would help to improve health prospects for children and the elderly, who are particularly susceptible to poor air quality.

No Action Alternative (D). Absent a Bureau-initiated air quality management strategy, projects on BLM-lands would still be required to comply with National Ambient Air Quality Standard for PM₁₀; however, a greater economic burden would be placed on private interests to attain the PM₁₀ standard valley wide.

Multiple-Use Classification. Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C), Alternatives A and No Action (D). Implementation of the proposed multiple-use classification system, or continuation of current Multiple-Use Classes, would not adversely or disproportionately impact minority or special populations. Multiple-Use Class (MUC) categories would be assigned based on ecological characteristics of BLM-managed lands. MUC assignments are intended to preserve the values of these lands for all populations, while still providing for concentrated human uses, where possible.

Habitat Conservation Objectives. Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C). The proposed habitat conservation objectives would be based on biological habitat type, not the characteristics of the human population. All proposed development, regardless of the ethnic or other characteristics of the project proponent, would be assessed for compatibility with the conservation system and may be required to implement appropriate mitigation measures on BLM-managed lands.

Alternative A and No Action (D). All proposed development, regardless of the ethnic or other characteristics of the project proponent, would be assessed in accordance with current regulations and policies, and may be required to implement appropriate mitigation measures on BLM-managed lands.

Fire Management. Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C), Alternatives A and No Action (D). No impacts to minorities, children, or special populations would occur as a result of the Proposed Plan or other alternatives. The proposed fire management categories (Proposed Plan) would be determined based on biological habitat type, not the characteristics of a particular segment of the population.

Special Area Designations. Proposed Plan (Alternative A), Alternatives B, C and No Action (D). The designation of special areas, such as ACECs and Wildlife Habitat Management Areas, or continuation of current designations, would provide special management attention for the protection of important ecological, cultural or other natural resources. Where cultural resources are being protected, such a designation may indirectly benefit certain ethnic groups, such as Native American populations, by protecting elements of their heritage. Otherwise, such designations would not adversely or disproportionately impact minority or special populations.

Land Tenure: Exchange and Sale Criteria. Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C). The proposed criteria were designed to ensure that future land exchanges and sales are compatible with designated conservation areas. Adoption of these criteria would not adversely impact any minority group or special population. In fact, it would indirectly benefit Native American groups by assuring that BLM-managed public lands containing historic Native American values are not disposed from public ownership, except for

stewardship transfer to the appropriate tribes. Should the criteria be adopted, all land exchange, sale, and acquisition proposals would still be subject to NEPA environmental review, public review and input, and land appraisals to assure the proposed exchange is in the public interest.

Alternatives A and No Action (D). Public land disposal would be considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the CDCA Plan, as amended. Such considerations would not adversely impact any minority group or special population. All land exchange, sale, and acquisition proposals would still be subject to NEPA environmental review, public review and input, and land appraisals to assure the proposed exchange is in the public interest.

Land Tenure: Acquisition Criteria. Proposed Plan (Alternatives B and C), Alternatives A and No Action (D). Adoption of the land acquisition criteria, or consideration of acquisitions on a case-by-case basis, would not adversely or disproportionately affect any segment of the human population. The Proposed Plan would assure that land is acquired from willing sellers only and that acquisitions are conducted in coordination with local jurisdictions.

Management of Acquired Lands. Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C). The Proposed Plan would facilitate consistency between special area designations, such as ACECs, and newly acquired lands located within their boundaries. It would not adversely or disproportionately impact any segment of the human population.

No Action Alternative (D). Managing acquired and formerly withdrawn lands in accordance with applicable land and mineral laws would not adversely or disproportionately impact any segment of the human population.

Communication Sites and Utilities. Proposed Plan (Alternative B). The Proposed Plan would limit windpark and communication site development to designated areas. Areas would be selected for their consistency with habitat conservation objectives, not the presence or absence of a particular segment of the human population. All development proposals would be required to occur within designated areas, regardless of racial, ethnic, or other characteristics of the project proponent. Future development projects would be required to meet land health standards and implement necessary mitigation measures, which would minimize impacts to all segments of the population.

Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). Future development projects and renewals of rights-of-way would be required to meet land health standards and implement necessary mitigation measures, which would minimize impacts to all segments of the population.

Sand and Gravel Mining. Proposed Plan (Alternative B). No impacts to minorities or special populations would occur as a result of designating areas for sand and gravel mining. Areas where mining is permitted would be selected for the presence of mineral

resources and their compatibility with habitat conservation objectives, not the presence or absence of a particular segment of the population.

However, the development of future mining projects within these areas could concentrate fugitive dust and other pollutant emissions on these and surrounding lands, thereby increasing potential health problems to children and others. All projects would be required to meet BLM land health standards and state and federal ambient air quality standards, and may be required to implement additional site-specific mitigation measures to minimize these impacts to acceptable levels.

Alternatives A and No Action (D). Impacts would be the same as described under the Proposed Plan, except extraction locations could occur over a broader area.

Alternative C. Impacts would be the same as described under the Proposed Plan, except extraction locations would be further limited, i.e., they would be restricted to areas outside CVMSHCP conservation areas.

Livestock Grazing. Proposed Plan (Alternative A), Alternatives B and C.

Discontinuing livestock grazing use of all or a portion of the Whitewater Canyon grazing allotment would not adversely or disproportionately impact any special segment of the human population, other than the permittee. Such an action would affect all BLM land lessees or permittees in the same manner, regardless of their ethnic, economic, or other affiliations.

No Action Alternative (D). Current management of the Whitewater Canyon grazing allotment would not adversely or disproportionately impact any special segment of the human population, other than the permittee.

Wild Horse and Burro Program. Proposed Plan (Alternative B). The proposed transfer of BLM parcels within the Palm Canyon HMA to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians (ACBCI) would benefit the tribe by providing it with additional acreage within the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains National Monument. Such a transfer would occur in close coordination and consultation with the tribe to assure that the action is mutually agreeable. The proposed deletion of the Palm Canyon and Morongo HMAs would not adversely affect any segment of the human population.

Alternative C. The proposed deletion of the Palm Canyon and Morongo HMAs would not adversely affect any segment of the human population.

Alternative A and No Action (D). Retention of the Palm Canyon and Morongo HMAs would not adversely affect any segment of the human population.

Motorized Vehicle Area Designations. Alternatives A and No Action (D). The designation of OHV open areas in and of itself (Alternative A), or continuation of current uses in the same areas (No Action), would not adversely or disproportionately affect any segment of the population. However, concentrated motor vehicle use within designated

areas or current OHV use areas could result in the generation of fugitive dust and other pollutant emissions that could affect children and other sensitive populations. Regardless, the number of motor vehicle users and the frequency of use within these areas are not expected to be sufficient enough to constitute a significant health threat. As required by 43 CFR 8342.1, BLM must assure that area designations are based on the promotion of public safety and the minimization of land use conflicts within and surrounding designated areas, including populated areas. Furthermore, the criteria described in Section 2.4.16 specifically require that motor vehicle areas be located to minimize damage to air and other resources of the public lands.

Proposed Plan (Alternative B) and Alternative C. Establishing an off-highway vehicle managed use area in the vicinity of Drop 31 which emphasizes opportunities for camping, trail riding and exploration along designated routes, trails and open washes (Proposed Plan) or continuation of current uses in the same area (Alternative C) would not adversely or disproportionately affect any segment of the population. The Drop 31 area is sufficiently distant from populated areas that generation of fugitive dust and other pollutant emissions would not affect children or other sensitive populations, except for those participating in activities on site.

Motorized Vehicle Route Designations. Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). The designation of motor vehicle routes (Proposed Plan, Alternatives A and C), or continuation of use on available “existing routes” (No Action), would not adversely or disproportionately affect any minorities or other special populations. Although vehicle use on such routes would result in the generation of fugitive dust and other air pollutants, the number of vehicles utilizing designated routes is not expected to be sufficient enough to constitute a public health hazard. Furthermore, in accordance with 43 CFR 8342.1, BLM must assure that all route designations are based on the promotion of public safety and the minimization of land use conflicts, and all routes must be located to minimize damage to air and other natural resources of the public lands.

Special Recreation Management Area. Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A and C. No impacts to minorities, children, or other special populations would occur as a result of designating the Meccacopia Special Recreation Management Area. Any management prescriptions emanating from the Recreation Area Management Plan would apply equally to all segments of the population.

Stopping, Parking and Vehicle Camping. Proposed Plan (Alternatives A and B), Alternatives C and No Action (D). The Proposed Plan and other alternatives restrict stopping, parking, and vehicle camping alongside all routes in the planning area. All restrictions would apply equally to all segments of the population, regardless of racial, economic, or other characterizations.

Peninsular Ranges Bighorn Sheep Management Strategy. Proposed Plan (Alternative B), Alternatives A, C and No Action (D). The Proposed Plan and other alternatives are intended to facilitate recovery of the bighorn sheep. Any resultant

restrictions would apply equally to all segments of the population, regardless of racial, economic, or other characterizations.

Hiking, Biking and Equestrian Trails. Proposed Plan (Alternatives A, B and C).

Limitations on trail use would not adversely or disproportionately impact minorities or special populations. All restrictions would be applied equally to all trail users, regardless of racial or other characterizations, in an effort to limit impacts to sensitive biological species or other resource values. Trails management would be coordinated with local jurisdictions and other public agencies to assure that all public interests are represented.

No Action Alternative (D). Continued use of all trails on public lands would not adversely or disproportionately impact minorities or special populations.